

COPY

FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM : USIS SAIGON
USIA Washington

TO : The Department of State, Washington

SUBJECT: Importance of the Services Rendered to USIS by Foreign Broadcast Information Service/Saigon

It has come to the attention of the post that the closing of the Saigon bureau of FBIS is under consideration. The post earnestly hopes that something can be done to prevent it. It occurs to us that it might be appropriate to set forth in some detail our reasons for desiring continued operation of the bureau, a desire which we believe is shared by all U.S. government agencies here.

Reports from the local FBIS bureau are topical, timely and reliable. Some of the services we receive could not be duplicated by service from another and more distant bureau.

It goes without saying that a propagandist's effectiveness can be measured in direct proportion to his knowledge of his target audience. According to recent OCB recommendations we are expected to devote increasing attention to directing our output toward North Vietnam. We cannot effectively reach a Northern Vietnamese audience without maximum and immediate knowledge of what they are doing and saying. Our best single source is the local FBIS bureau. We understand that only a part of their coverage of Radio Hanoi could be duplicated from the next nearest bureau (Okinawa).

Moreover, theirs is the only reliable summary of the North Vietnam press. Most of our output here in the South regarding North Vietnam, i.e., exposing Communist lies, weaknesses, mistakes, etc., is based on FBIS material.

FBIS/Saigon gives us rapid service. Not only do we receive their bulletins quickly, we are often alerted immediately by telephone if an item is of particular importance. Furthermore, if we know, in advance, of some special broadcast such as a speech by a Communist bigwig, we can request full text, and we get it immediately after delivery.

FBIS/Saigon is the only ear we have tuned to clandestine radio operations in Vietnam, since the power of such stations is limited. Opposition to the government in this country must of necessity be clandestine. Open opposition is not permitted. The importance of our knowing what the opposition is saying at all times cannot be underestimated.

Evaluation B. 6.

OFFICIAL USE ONLY

COPY

Page 2
From USIS Saigon

The local monitoring of Cambodian broadcasts could not be duplicated on Okinawa, even if that bureau could receive the signals, because Okinawa has no Cambodian-language staff. With Cambodian-Vietnamese relations progressively deteriorating, it is necessary for us to keep abreast of Cambodian government propaganda output.

Quite aside from the formal services which FBIS/Saigon provides for American agencies here, there is the fact that the small but excellent staff is always available for informal consultation. There is no more knowledgeable group of men in the field of communist propaganda hereabouts, and their departure would deal a heavy blow to the entire USIS effort. And while it is conceded that much of the same output could be provided from Okinawa, the time lag could be critical and the volume necessarily would be less, because post communication facilities already are strained to the limit.

Robert P. Speer
Country Public Affairs Officer

Evaluation B. 6.

OFFICIAL USE ONLY